

# The Crusades

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Pd: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **What were the Crusades?** The Crusades were a series of Holy Wars launched by the Christian states of Europe against the *Saracens*. The term 'Saracen' was the word used to describe a Muslim during the time of the Crusades. In 1095, Pope Urban II delivered his infamous speech in front of a large crowd at the Council of Clermont, urging them to engage in a Christian "holy war" to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim rule. For their efforts, Urban II promised a complete remission of sins. The Pope's preaching led to thousands immediately affixing the cross to their garments - the name Crusade given to the Holy Wars came from old French word 'crois' meaning 'cross'. Thus the word "crusade" literally means "going to the Cross." The Crusades were tremendous military expeditions undertaken by the Christian nations of Europe for the purpose of rescuing the holy places of Palestine from the hands of the Muslims.



Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont

2. **What was the Cause for the Crusades?** The reason for the crusades was a war between Christians and Muslims which centered around the city of Jerusalem. The City of Jerusalem held a Holy significance to the Christian religion. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem commemorated the hill of crucifixion and the tomb of Christ's burial and was visited by Pilgrims. In 1009, the Muslim leader al-Hakim ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In 1039 his successor, after requiring large sums be paid for the right, permitted the Byzantine Empire to rebuild it. Pilgrimages were allowed to the Holy Lands before and after the Sepulchre was rebuilt, but for a time pilgrims were captured and some of the clergy were killed. The Muslim conquerors eventually realized that the wealth of Jerusalem came from the pilgrims; with this realization the persecution of pilgrims stopped. However, the damage was already done, and the violence of the Muslims in Jerusalem became part of the concern that spread the passion for the Crusades.

3. **What were the Objectives of the Crusades?** One of the main objectives of the crusades was at first to reclaim the Holy Land, in particular Jerusalem, from the Saracens, but in time was extended to seizing Spain from the Moors (Spanish Muslims), the Slavs and Pagans from eastern Europe, and the islands of the Mediterranean.

4. **How many Crusades were there?** There were approximately eight crusades. The first four crusades were seen as the most important and scant reference is made to the other crusades - with the exception of the Children's crusade which led to the decline of the crusades. For a period of two hundred years Europe and Asia were engaged in almost constant warfare. Throughout this period there was a continuous movement of crusaders to and from the Muslim possessions in the middle east, Syria, and Egypt.

5. **The First Crusade** The first crusade, which is considered by many to be the only successful crusade, lasted from 1095-1099, established the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, providing more lands for the crusading knights, who often travelled across Europe to try their fortunes and to visit the Holy Sepulchre.



Artwork depicting the "triumphant" siege of Jerusalem during the 1st Crusade

## 6. The other Crusades

The crusaders went to Jerusalem with one main goal in mind -- to take control of the Holy Land back from the Muslims. Despite many attempts, this goal was never reached. Small Christian states were established for a time in and around Jerusalem, but they soon returned to Muslim control.

There was another loss for the crusaders too. The eastern Christian empire, known as the Byzantine Empire, fell into the hands of the Muslim Turks after the end of the Crusades.

7. **The Crusaders** The Crusades drew inspiration from two Christian institutions, pilgrimage and holy war: liberation of the holy places from Muslim rule partook of the character of both. Pilgrimage played an important role in Christian piety. Visiting sacred sites, revering religious relics, and penance brought (its critics would say "bought") indulgences which promised the remission of sins. Jerusalem, central to the origins of Christian faith, was a symbol of the heavenly city of God and thus a major pilgrimage site. At the same time, the notion of holy war transformed and sacralized medieval warfare and its notions of honor and chivalry. Warriors were victorious whether they won their earthly battles or not. To rout the enemy meant honor and booty; the indulgences earned by all who fought in the Crusades guaranteed the remission of sins and entrance into paradise. To fall in battle was to die a martyr for the faith and gain immediate access to heaven despite past sins.

## 8. The Effects of the Crusades

The crusades could not fail to affect in many ways the life of western Europe. For instance, they helped to undermine (bring an end to) feudalism. Thousands of barons and knights sold their lands in order to raise money for a crusading expedition. Thousands more perished in the Middle East and their estates, through failure of heirs, were repossessed by the King.

The Crusades contributed to increase the wealth of the Church and the power of the Papacy (Popes). Thus the prominent part which the Popes took in the enterprises naturally fostered their authority and influence, by placing in their hands, the armies and resources of Christendom, and accustoming the people to look to them as guides and leaders.

Crusaders returning from Jerusalem brought back goods that stirred up an interest in trade with the Middle East. Europeans once again wanted to buy and trade for items like spices and fabrics. Business between Europe and the Middle East increased. The demand for spices like pepper, cinnamon, ginger, and saffron grew. Fine silks and jewelry from the Middle East were in demand. Glass and mirrors became popular items.

The crusaders brought back more than just material goods. They brought back knowledge and ideas. They brought back the idea of a university, where higher learning would be made available. This was a huge change for Medieval Europe, where higher education had largely been confined to monasteries for years.

The influence of the Crusades upon the intellectual development of Europe can hardly be overestimated. Above all, they liberalized the minds of the crusaders. The East at the time of the Middle Ages surpassed the West in civilization. The crusaders enjoyed the advantages which come from travel in strange lands and among unfamiliar peoples. They went out from their castles or villages to see great cities, marble palaces, superb dresses, and elegant manners; they returned with finer tastes, broader ideas, and wider sympathies. The crusades opened up a new world. Furthermore, the knowledge of the science and learning of the East gained by the crusaders through their expeditions, greatly stimulated the Latin intellect, and helped to awaken in Western Europe that mental activity which resulted finally in the great intellectual outburst known as the Revival of Learning and the period of the Renaissance.

In the end, the Crusades opened up the world to the people of the Middle Ages. Medieval knights, serfs, and merchants who had formerly thought of the Muslim world only as a mysterious far-away place were now enjoying products from the Middle East and learning new ideas from the Middle East. They were becoming citizens of a larger world.

On a blank piece of paper, answer the following questions:

1. What were the Crusades?
2. What is a Saracen?
3. What was the cause of the Crusades?
4. Why was Jerusalem a Holy City to Christians? Why was it a Holy City to Muslims?
5. What two aspects of Christianity helped drive the crusaders to embark on the crusades?
6. What were the impacts of the Crusades?